

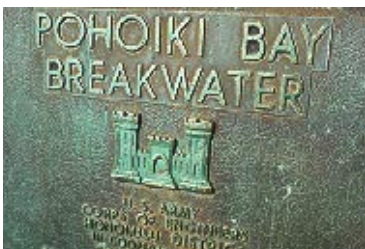
# Department of Land and Natural Resources

## Sustainability Hotspot

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### POHOIKI BOAT RAMP

~Big Island of Hawaii~



Top to bottom: Pohoiki Bay on a calm day, Army Corps of Engineers plaque on the breakwater, beachgoers pay no heed to signs and swim at their own risk, surfers must give right of way to vessels entering and leaving the bay.

*P*ohoiki Boat Ramp, constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1963, is the only launching facility located in the Big Island's Puna District. The Ramp is an 18-foot wide, single-lane concrete ramp located at Pohoiki Bay within the County's Isaac Hale Beach Park. A protective breakwater was constructed by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1979.

The Pohoiki Boat Ramp, DLNR's sole holding in the entire bay area, is the only access to the ocean for boating and swimming within the County park (approximately two miles in either direction). All adjacent property is owned and maintained by the County of Hawaii.

The ocean access at the boat ramp is an ingress/egress zone, not only for boaters, but also for swimmers, divers, and surfers. On any given day during the busy summer months, there could be over 50 swimmers in the water while boats are entering and exiting the narrow corridor.

A boat approaching Pohoiki Boat Ramp from the ocean requires a tight, 90-degree turn, usually at a high rate of speed, around a blind corner to make it safely to the ramp. Swimmers in the water cannot see a vessel approaching, nor can an approaching vessel see swimmers in the water. Ocean swells require boaters to "time" their entry into the channelway accessing the launch ramp. A slight miscalculation could result in the grounding of a vessel.

Marine resources in the immediate area of the boat ramp are not in conspicuous and imminent danger. But, it must be noted that no long-term ecological monitoring has occurred in the area where baseline data is available. The human impact on the marine resource comes primarily from pole and spear fishing during the spring and summer months. Collection of crustaceans also occurs during these periods.

During the fall and winter months, the prevalent weather can change considerably, making the launching of vessels from the boat ramp extremely dangerous. The ramp is therefore seldom used during this time. The marine resources have time to regenerate and recover during these winter months.

Shore resources are heavily impacted by human use. The boat ramp is located within a County park where many recreational activities occur. Camping, swimming, fishing, hiking, barbecuing, boating, and other recreation activities all occur within a small geographic zone. There are no known endangered species or plants within the confines of the County park.

# Department of Land and Natural Resources

## Sustainability Hotspot

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### POHOIKI BOAT RAMP

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Top to bottom: view of boat ramp from breakwater, boaters must navigate a blind turn around the breakwater to safely reach the ramp, Pohoiki Sustainability Hotspot Team leader Bearman, team members Kawamoto (left) and Unoki (right).

Pohoiki Boat Ramp is a designated DLNR Sustainability Hotspot based on the public safety consideration. The simultaneous activities occurring in the water pose a safety risk that has demanded the attention of State and County officials.

#### The DLNR Sustainability Hotspot Team:

**Jeff Bearman - Boating and Ocean Recreation; Big Island, 329-4997;**  
Eric Kawamoto - Conservation and Resources Enforcement;  
Charlene Unoki - Land Division;

is charged with the management of this coastal resource.

#### DLNR's Vision for the Future and How to Attain It

"Safe" and "clean" are the key words DLNR would like to use in the long-term vision for this resource. A viable solution for the problems found at Pohoiki Bay will require a close partnership between DLNR and the County of Hawaii. DLNR will work to improve and maintain safety at the boat ramp area. Further improvements to the site and adjacent lands by the County could include:

- improvements to sanitation and cleanliness at camping/picnicking areas;
- construction of composting toilets;
- paving of area parking lots;
- provision of safe access to the ocean for swimming;
- posting of adequate signage to inform swimmers and boaters of the potential dangers in the water.

The use of the boat ramp may always cause a safety hazard despite the efforts of the Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE) officers and the County lifeguards to warn swimmers to stay clear of boats in the channel. As a possible solution to the problem, repairs could be made to the County swimming pool, located near the launch ramp, to encourage swimmers to use this facility rather than the hazardous boat ramp facility. 🌺